



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***SELF-ESTEEM, RESILIENCE, PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND
ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEEKING COUNSELING AMONG PRE-
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN A UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA***

PUSPHA A/P SUKUMARAN

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**SELF-ESTEEM, RESILIENCE, PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND
ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEEKING COUNSELING AMONG PRE-UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN A UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA**

By

PUSPHA A/P SUKUMARAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti
Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

May 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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PUSPHA A/P SUKUMARAN

May 2019

Chair : Sidek Mohd Noah, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

The current study aims to assess the attitudes towards seeking psychological help and identify how it correlates with psychological variables such as self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support among Malaysian university students. It is hypothesized that self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support would have a negative influence on help seeking attitudes.

This study investigates the relationship between three independent variables and a dependent variable by using quantitative survey techniques. A survey enables researchers to see the correlation between factors, test multiple hypotheses and answer research questions. Furthermore, survey also enables researcher to draw generalizations concerning gathered data from the sample population.

This study's design is a combination of descriptive and correlational studies. Descriptive studies is used to assess the general level of self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support, t-test is used to establish the difference of each variable according to specific demographic data whereas correlational analysis was used to assess relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable of this study. Random sample selection method was used to recruit 260 respondents for this study. The questionnaires used in the study are Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, Pearson's correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis.

The research findings show that majority of students had moderate level of self-esteem (80.4%) and resilience (79.4%) and high level of perceived social support (73.5%). Majority of students also reported moderate level of attitudes towards seeking counseling (83.5%). The finding of this study manifests a negative correlation between self-esteem on attitudes towards seeking counseling. A positive correlation was established between perceived social support and attitudes towards seeking counseling. Resilience shows no correlation with attitudes towards seeking counseling. Further analysis using multiple regressions reveals that only self-esteem and perceived social support significantly predict attitudes towards seeking counseling.

The results from this study will thus help to develop new interventions for campus health services in helping their students adapt and face challenging situations. It has implications for counselors who are working with young adults in detecting factors that prevent them from seeking psychological help in an effort to encourage their help seeking attitudes. Policy makers are able to gain insight on how to promote the overall counseling services by identifying disabling factors.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**HARGA DIRI, DAYA TAHAN, SOKONGAN SOSIAL DAN SIKAP TERHADAP
MENDAPATKAN KAUNSELING DI KALANGAN PELAJAR PRA-UNIVERSITI
DI SEBUAH UNIVERSITI DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

PUSPHA A/P SUKUMARAN

Mei 2019

Pengerusi : Sidek Mohd Noah, PhD
Fakulti : Pengajian Pendidikan

Kajian semasa bertujuan untuk menilai sikap terhadap mencari bantuan psikologi dan mengenal pasti bagaimana ia berkait dengan pembolehubah psikologi seperti harga diri, daya tahan dan sokongan sosial di kalangan pelajar universiti di Malaysia. Adalah menjadi hipotesis bahawa harga diri, daya tahan dan sokongan sosial akan memberi pengaruh negatif terhadap sikap mendapatkan bantuan.

Kajian ini menyiasat hubungan antara tiga pembolehubah bebas dan pembolehubah bersandar dengan menggunakan teknik tinjauan kuantitatif. Tinjauan membolehkan penyelidik melihat korelasi antara faktor, menguji pelbagai hipotesis dan menjawab soalan kajian. Selain itu, tinjauan juga membolehkan penyelidik untuk membuat generalisasi mengenai data yang dikumpulkan dari populasi sampel.

Reka bentuk kajian ini adalah gabungan kajian deskriptif dan korelasi. Kajian deskriptif digunakan untuk menilai tahap umum harga diri, daya tahan dan sokongan sosial, ujian-t digunakan untuk menentukan perbezaan setiap pembolehubah mengikut data demografi tertentu manakala analisis korelasi digunakan untuk menilai hubungan antara pembolehubah bebas dan pembolehubah bersandar dalam kajian ini. Kaedah pemilihan sampel rawak digunakan untuk merekrut 260 responden untuk kajian ini. Instrumen soal selidik yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah Skala Harga Diri Rosenberg (SES), Skala Ketahanan Connor-Davidson (CD-RISC), Skala Multidimensional Untuk Sokongan Sosial (MSPSS) dan Skala Sikap Terhadap Bantuan Psikologi Profesional (ATSPPHS). Data dianalisis menggunakan statistic deskriptif, ujian-t, analisis korelasi Pearson dan analisis regresi berganda.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa majority pelajar mempunyai tahap harga diri (80.4%) dan daya tahan (79.4%) yang sederhana manakala tahap sokongan sosial (73.5%) mereka adalah tinggi. Majoriti pelajar juga melaporkan tahap sikap mendapatkan bantuan kaunseling (83.5%) yang sederhana. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan korelasi negatif antara harga diri dengan sikap mendapatkan bantuan kaunseling. Korelasi positif terbukti di antara sokongan sosial dengan sikap mendapatkan bantuan kaunseling. Daya tahan tidak menunjukkan sebarang korelasi dengan sikap mendapatkan bantuan kaunseling. Analisis lanjut menggunakan regresi berganda mendedahkan bahawa hanya harga diri dan sokongan sosial yang meramalkan sikap mendapatkan bantuan kaunseling dengan ketara.

Hasil daripada kajian ini akan membantu untuk membangunkan intervensi baru untuk perkhidmatan kesihatan kampus dalam membantu pelajar menyesuaikan diri dan menghadapi situasi yang mencabar. Ia mempunyai implikasi untuk kaunselor yang bekerja dengan remaja dalam mengesan faktor-faktor yang menghalang mereka daripada mendapatkan bantuan psikologi dengan tujuan menggalakkan sikap mendapatkan bantuan. Pembuat dasar dapat memperoleh pandangan tentang bagaimana untuk mempromosikan perkhidmatan kaunseling secara keseluruhan dengan mengenalpasti faktor-faktor penghalang.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Sidek Mohd Noah, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Jamaludin Ahmad, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

Declaration by graduate student

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Signature: _____
Name of Chairman
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Committee: _____

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Name of Member of
Supervisory
Committee: _____



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
RSES	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
CD-RISC	Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale
MSPSS	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
ATSPPH	Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
n	Number of subject
p	Significance
r	Correlation Coefficient
α	Alpha

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter aims to discuss the research background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, hypotheses, conceptual framework, research significance, definition of research variables and summary.

1.2 Background

Alarming news headlines and current happenings continue to show an increase in stress and mental health problems. A Malaysian daily reported that 40% of Malaysians, 4 out of every 10 would be affected by some type of mental health issues in their lifespan. Consultant psychiatrist, Dr. Philip George explained that the statistics are usually modulated due to the stigma surrounding the issue. The news article also shared World Bank's prognostication that 340 million of the population is at risk of depression by the year 2020. Although the National Health and Morbidity survey declares only 1.8% of the local population as depressed, there is reason to believe that the actual figures are higher (Damodaran, 2017). This is a serious global issue that requires immediate attention.

The National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015 reports a disturbing trend of mental health issue and related problems among students with figures swelling from 1 in 10 students in 2011, to 1 in 5 students in 2016. A study conducted revealed higher mental health problems among younger adults, those 16 years of age and above, and an increasing trend could be seen, 10.7% in 1996 to 29.2% in 2015 to be specific. According to Befrienders Kuala Lumpur, 27% of the 21,256 people who contacted them had mentioned suicide (Lim, 2017).

Research indicates that college students are in jeopardy of mental health problems. Common psychological problems noted among students are anxiety, stress and depression. According to the American College Health Association (2000 & 2015), anxiety among college students was 6.7% in 2000 and the number increased to 15.8% 15 years later. The rates of depression for this age group have also progressively escalated from 10% in 2000 to 13.1% in 2015. University and college period is a transition phase into adulthood, increasing student's susceptibility to stress. Students have to acclimatize to different psychological changes in the university. While keeping up to academic demands, students face a very different lifestyle and social environment. There is pressure to explore and ascertain self-identity, live independently, manage

finances, perform in academic and chosen co-curricular activities and adapt to new social life.

Self-esteem defines a person's worth and self-concept, high or low, based on positive and negative self-perceptions (Bailey, 2003). Degree of discrepancy between a person's goal and accomplishments, emotional support received or perceived from family and friends or other significant ones shapes self-esteem. A person's successes and failures also play a part in developing self-esteem. (Lian & Yusooff, 2009). Self-esteem holds a crucial position in improving human competency and proficiency, which eventually develops a person's full potential.

Studies have shown low self-esteem and psychiatric disorders such as anxiety stress and depression prevalent amongst children and youths worldwide. A study carried out among adolescents in Malaysian in 2009, results showed positive connection between depression and stress and negative relationship with self-esteem. Emotional variables such as stress, anxiety and depression emerged to be substantial contributors to self-esteem among participants. These variables were identified to be acute factors in the development of low self-esteem among adolescents and this agreed with some past researches (Yaacob et al., 2019). The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry issued a report in 2015 showing 99.9% of orphaned children and adolescents in Malaysia with low levels of low self-worth and confidence (Sadho, 2015). However there is a lack of research and data among students' level of self-esteem in general especially among groups that are not classified to be at risk, for example high achieving students or university graduates.

Self-esteem correlates with many cognitive, emotional and behavioral variables (Leary and MacDonald, 2003). It is key to understand the self-esteem trajectory among students to identify its effect on them, for example, how self-esteem would affect their attitude towards seeking counseling in particular.

Resilience is crucial for a person handling challenging situations in life. According to Zautra (2009), resilient people can interact with the environment and process that promote either their well-being or safeguard them from the devastating effect of risk factors. Resilience is one of the positive psychology elements that explore strength and positive human values (Snyder & Lopez, 2007) and can be developed through challenges faced in an individual's life (Patterson, 2002). Many researches revolved around the notion of resilience in an attempt to comprehend the course of action, on how people learn to handle difficulties and become more robust (Cicchetti, 2010). Over the years, researches have been conducted to study the correlation between resilience and other variables. A research scrutinizing 130 adolescents in Italy on their levels of resilience, self-efficacy, and thinking styles while studying the relationship between the variables found that adolescents with high level of resilience discerned themselves to be productive (Sagone and Caroli, 2013). One other study conducted with 435 undergraduate students, British namely,

found academic self-efficacy and academic resilience to be positively correlated (Cassidy, 2015).

A large number of literature on resilience focuses on cultivating resilience amongst adolescents and children living amidst severe challenges, such as, poverty or having mentally ill parents (Werner and Smith, 1992). Resilience is often not measured among students, especially those who are not known to be at risk directly. We should not overlook or underestimate the challenges adolescents face entering university as they are far from family, facing the challenge of adapting to a new environment away from one that they are accustomed to (Habibah, Nooreen and Rahil, 2010). Also present, the test of adapting to adulthood (Tasleem and Strydom, 2013).

Shumaker and Brownell (1984) defined perceived social support as an interchange of resources, verbal, non-verbal or practical assistance between individuals recognizing that the interchange improves or benefits the individual's well being positively. Perceived social support develops resilience in people especially during stressful times and averts a psychopathology or condition from developing (Ozbay et al., 2007). In addition, a person gains the needed resources to survive any calamity faced (Chi et al., 2011). Rozumah and Nor Sheereen (2009) suggested developing adolescents feel comfortable about sharing private worries with friends or a significant other, more so than family members. Literatures have identified family, friends and "significant other" as an integral part of perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988).

According to Mattanah et al. (2010), generally perceived social support enables a person to handle hardship and bounce back from it successfully. An interesting research acknowledged social support as a crucial aspect in reducing the undesirable effects of life crises among Chinese (Chi et al., 2011). declared that people are able to cope better in severe situations when they have the perception of a resilient network of social support as opposed to those without. Perceived social support gained from peers can aid students in college or university cope with adjustment issues better (Lee, Suchday and Wylie-Rosett, 2012). Upon examining social support among adolescents, Frey and Rothlisberger (1996) discovered that when the issue is minor or trivial, they are prone to confiding in friends and this happens more frequently. For major issues, on the other hand, they often turn to family members.

Several studies however have detected low utilization of services offered by certified mental health practitioners, namely attitudes towards seeking help among this risk group. Examining attitudes towards seeking professional help can augment comprehension of students' usage of mental health services because attitudes are the best prognosticators of tangible behaviors (Sutton, 1998). Early identification and deterrence of mental health issues among young people in college or university is imperative. Comprehension of their psychological variables, namely self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support distress also their correlates, would enable apt screening and

intervention programs to intercept mental health problems in this population. This is essential to enhance academic achievement and success in their career development and for the future of the nation, as this population is potential leaders of the country.

The current study targets to evaluate the attitudes towards seeking psychological help and identify how it correlates with psychological variables such as self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support among university students in Malaysia. The conclusions of this research will enable the advancement of new interventions for campus health services in assisting students to adjust to and cope with demanding situations. It is hypothesized that self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support is exacerbated by poor socioeconomic background and would have a negative effect on help seeking attitudes.

However, many students struggling with personal, academic, career or relationship related issues still blatantly refuse to seek professional psychological help. Students do not even consider it a possible avenue of assistance to help resolve their problems. Past studies have shown tremendous underutilization of counseling services in Malaysian universities and colleges despite rising needs (Salim, 2010). Crammer (1999) found a strong link between attitudes and actual help seeking behaviours, therefore improved understanding of help seeking attitudes among Malaysian students would enable realignment and improvement of services. Therefore, this research intends to establish the willingness of Malaysian students in universities to obtain psychological assistance by scrutinizing the influence of psychological variables namely, self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support towards seeking professional psychological help in the universities. According to Reiko (2008), studies attitudes towards obtaining or pursuing psychological aid amongst Malaysian scholars only to realize that 90% of the respondents were not well informed about psychological concerns. Chin and Louis (2009) found a negative correlation between Asian cultural values and help seeking attitudes. European American values were proven to have more constructive correlation with help seeking attitudes as Western dogmas originate from principles such as independence, individuality, and future orientations which are more prevalent in individualistic cultures. Although counseling services exists in Malaysia, it is not the result of empirical studies conducted but mostly because the services are offered in advanced countries therefore it was adopted that Malaysia also has necessity for such services (Chian & Lois, 2009).

Malaysia is a culturally and religiously diverse country; religion is intertwined with ethnicity; most Malaysians are multilingual. Like many other Asian countries, Malaysia gives greater emphasis to the values of group rather than individuals, a nation well known for its collectivist culture. The stigma attached to counseling is strong with the perception that individuals seeking professional psychological help are those with mental illnesses. The fear of being labeled, stereotyped, separated and discriminated delays efforts to attain care or

prevents people from seeking any form of help. Mental health issues are perceived as shameful and disclosure is avoided in attempts to protect oneself from 'losing face'. The Malaysian society labels those seeking counseling services as insane, crazy or "gila" in the Malay language (Shanthi, et al., 2012). Most Malaysians still adhere to cultural beliefs and traditional practices when facing mental health issues. Mental health symptoms are often associated with spiritism and supernatural forces for which the help of traditional or religious healers are sought after.

Counseling is a form of self-expression about one's private self, an action deemed complicated and challenging to the Malaysian culture (Mansor, 2010). It has been observed that Malaysians are uncomfortable and fearful of the act of engaging in an in-depth conversation with a stranger (Raja Mohan & Sorooshian, 2012). Furthermore, one's willingness in seeking counseling are controlled by various personal factors such as fear to disclose own self, fear of emotion, fear of treatment, low self-esteem (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007), low interpersonal dependency and preference for self reliance (Guliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010; Komiya et al., 2000; Shanthi et al., 2012; Sharp, 2011). These inner self-barriers will deter one from seeking psychological help.

In the 1960's people diagnosed with mental health illness in Malaysia were commonly stigmatized and institutionalized. The development of the National Mental health policy in 1997 witnessed a major change where people with mental illness were now being de-institutionalized. With the introduction of the National Mental Health Act in 2001, many sufferers were being assimilated back into community, cared for by family members with the support from community clinics and general hospitals. This aligned with the World Health Organization's recommendation to allow sufferers an opportunity to co-exist in society, living in their own environment.

Counseling was first established in Malaysia in 1963 through the Education Planning and Research Division then which made it compulsory for all schools to set up a guidance and counseling section. Guidance was made an integral part of education to nurture healthy independent decision-making abilities. However deficiency of finance and human resources thwarted this goal before reaching any fulfillment. These plans were restored in the 1980s following the escalation of drug problems among youth in Malaysia. The Ministry of Education recognized the necessity for every secondary school in Malaysia to have guidance and counseling services and specialized teachers to spearhead the work. By the year 2000, there was at least one full-time at every secondary school in Malaysia.

Since 1980s, higher educational institutions and other teaching organizations have started to incorporate guidance and counseling courses into their courses and programs and this number has increased steadily over the years. In 1982, the Malaysian Counseling Association, as known as PERKAMA was founded. Various trainings, workshops and conferences are regularly organized for the

betterment of the counseling profession locally. In 1998, counseling in Malaysia gained professional and legal recognition when the Counsellors Act 1998 (Act 580) was enacted to regulate practice. By mid 2009, the Board of Counselors had 1749 registered counselors and 1219 of them were licensed to practice counseling.

Although the counseling services and profession in the last decade has witnessed a remarkable growth surge, it is sadly still insufficient to attend to our needs: the dramatic escalation of social problems, the increasing number of troubled children, teens, young adults and adults notwithstanding the general need for professional emotional assistance among the general public. Sadly in Asia, seeking any form of psychological help is still prevalently viewed as taboo.

1.3 Problem Statement

Very few people who struggle with issues relating to mental health seek professional psychological help, the numbers range from 11% to 30% in a year. The number of men seeking this form of help is less common than women (Andrews, Issakidis, & Carter, 2001). A study conducted on German adolescents showed that only 41.2% sought mental health services. A comprehensive research of more than 11,000 school-going adolescents between 15 and 16 years of age in Norway revealed that only 34% suffering from depression and anxiety had obtained professional aid in earlier years. A national mental health survey conducted among young people in Australia showed a shocking outcome, just 25% of children between 4 and 17 years old with a possible diagnosis of mental condition had obtained health services prior to the survey. This delay, reluctance or hesitation to seek help extends beyond children and adolescents (Gulliver, Griffiths & Christensen, 2010).

According to Yeh (2002), a study of 594 Taiwanese college students revealed that 'students with high level of collective self-esteem may not be motivated to seek professional psychological help' (Yeh, 2002, p.26). 'Collective self-esteem' refers to the positivity of one's social character. It values the group more than the individual (Yeh, 2002, p. 22). Although collective self-esteem is different from self-esteem and may not be directly relevant to the present study, taking into account the lack of relevant research on self-esteem and help-seeking it may be of slight significance. Some research has reason to believe that self-esteem or fear of damaging one's self-esteem deters people from seeking psychological help that is needed (Chan, 2013). However, studies investigating how self-esteem and attitudes toward help seeking are correlated is scarce.

Resilience is often if not only studied among at-risk groups as children in foster care, divorces households, individuals suffering from terminal illness or other distressing life events. According to Kobak and Sceery (1988), dismissive individuals were not different from their secure correspondents in regards to

self-report measures of perceived social aptitude and anxiety despite having received peer evaluations of lower ego-resilience, increased apprehension, also aggression.

Past researches have suggested that a person's social network plays a crucial role in a person's attitude towards seeking professional psychological help when experiencing mental health symptoms. Friedson (1961) believed that peer judgments are significant to a person's ultimate decision to get medical treatment. According to Rickwood and Braithwaite (1994), it is important to have a social circle that accepts and encourages help seeking. Research shows that people's general behavior of seeking friends or family to speak to first before seeking professional psychological help. Talking about their problems or personal concerns was often the first or immediate course of action before anything else (Horwitz, 1977). Although researches have clearly established the relationship an individual incurs on their decision to get services related to mental health, not many researches have directly studied how one's social circle predicts attitude towards help seeking. As a result, we are not able to determine a person's social circle on a person's attitudes or intents to obtain mental health services.

The current research concentrates on self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support as possible underlying factors which may affect psychological help-seeking attitudes. The researcher intends to focus on adolescents in the university, a group of high achieving students going through a critical transitional phase in their physical and mental development. There are indications of a gap in previous research investigating these variables and attitude towards help-seeking. Furthermore, most past studies revolve around Western population and those that are Asian oriented are quite limited. The research aimed to determine the level of self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and attitudes towards seeking counseling while investigating whether self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support are factors predicting attitude towards seeking counseling help.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study is conducted with the following objectives:

1. To investigate the level of self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.
2. To determine the relationship between self-esteem and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.
3. To determine the relationship between resilience and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.

4. To determine the relationship between perceived social support and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.
5. To determine which factors among self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support significantly predict attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.

1.5 Research Questions

This study is conducted on the basis of the following research questions:

1. What is the level of self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents?
2. Is there a statistically positive relationship between self-esteem and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents?
3. Is there a statistically positive relationship between resilience and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents?
4. Is there a statistically positive relationship between perceived social support and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents?
5. Which factors among self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support significantly predict attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been formulated in this research based on past studies and theoretical framework:

- H_a1. There are high levels of self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and a statistically positive relationship between self-esteem and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.
- H_a2. There is a statistically positive relationship between self-esteem and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.
- H_a3. There is a statistically positive relationship between resilience and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.

- H_a4. There is a statistically positive relationship between perceived social support and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.
- H_a5. Self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support significantly predict attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

As shown below, the conceptual framework concentrates on the relationship between self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

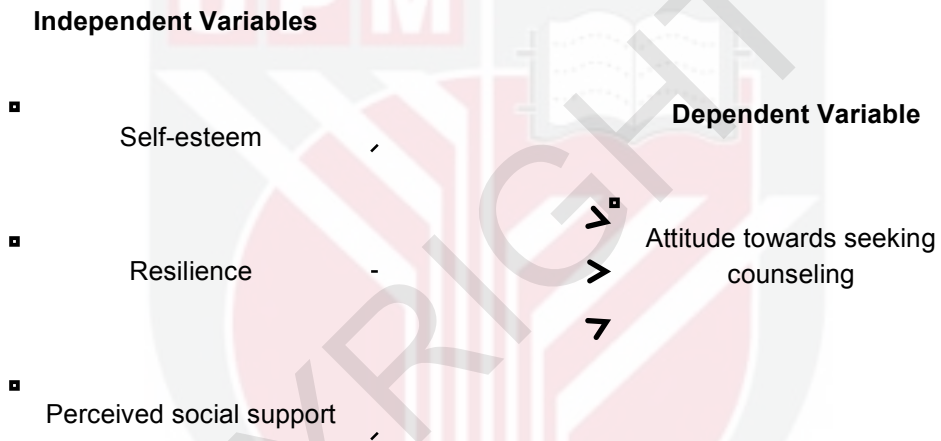


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.8 Significance of Study

This research is conducted with the intention of identifying the levels of self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and attitude towards seeking professional psychological aid namely, counseling, in an effort to help schools and educational institutions, parents and caregivers, psychological help service providers, government and the general public. Through this research, schools and other educational institutions by extension would be more aware of student demographics and its influence on their self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and help seeking attitudes.

This study is valuable for counselors and other professional psychological practitioners in schools. Furthermore, most of the current literatures on help

seeking attitudes revolve around Western countries. However, Malaysian culture is categorized as collectivism culture and differs from Western culture. As such, the emotional makeup and attitudes towards psychological help seeking behaviors may vary greatly thus resulting in cultural diversity issues which would require different handling methods.

This study will be useful for future studies because the respondents and population of this study are those who have been understudied in field of counseling. Prior researches conducted in western countries, even when focused on Asian population are carried out in the United States, Hong Kong, China and etc. Consequently, a question of comparability arises, how well do findings focused on American-Asians, Chinese in the Republic of China compare with or represent the entire Asian group? Moreover, Malaysia is made up of multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious society, unique in its population, background and ways. For example, Malaysians often approach mental health issues with a stigma as the condition is considered an embarrassment by society at large. Given the reasons above, people in general were not willing to pursue or obtain professional psychological help therefore it needs to be studied and explored further.

Furthermore, this research is also vital for counselors who are working with school students. Data obtained from this study would help counselors to be mindful of aspects that affect students' help seeking attitudes. This information allows counselors to be better equipped and prepared in rendering help to students who approach them also reach out those who may be hesitant or reluctant to seek psychological help.

This study also provides important information to parents and caregivers, enabling them to understand their children's emotional and mental make up, realize the significance and influence of societal backing on the adolescent's well being while acting as a positive stimulator towards help seeking attitudes and behavior.

To sum up, this study is important for students, schools, parents or caregivers, psychological help services, government and the general public so that they are able to pull their resources together in making psychological services more focused and readily available to help students of various backgrounds.

1.9 Limitation

The data for this research was gathered from Pusat ASASI Sains Pertanian, UPM located in Serdang. As such, the findings severely depended on the data collection from these respondents. Potential confines in this study, as follows:

Participants in the study are restricted to adolescents from Pusat ASASI Sains Pertanian UPM located in Serdang. As a result of the homogeneity of the sample, the generalizability of this finding to other population will be limited.

This study used self-report measures, which encountered the risk of response bias of the participants.

Participants of this research were between the ages of 17 and 18 years old. The respondents' age range restricted the generalizability of this research finding to individuals from similar age.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Below are some key terms explained:

1.10.1 Adolescents

The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes any person between the ages of 10 and 19 as an adolescent. An individual goes through various developmental changes in this time period known as adolescence. Physical, neuronal, hormonal, psychological and social change that occurs here makes the shift from childhood into adulthood.

In this study, students aged between 17-19 from the Centre of Foundation Studies for Agricultural Science (Pusat ASASI UPM) were used, as they are the only group in the university that fit into the adolescent category. Throughout this study, the pre-university students in Universiti Putra Malaysia used as target population will be referred to as 'adolescents.'

1.10.2 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the positive and negative values that one holds towards oneself (Rosenberg, 1995). Self-esteem refers to our worthiness as individuals (Neff, 2011). In this study, self-esteem is operationally defined as one's view of self worth, high self-esteem giving one the confidence to face problems independently thus cutting off available help or low self-esteem causing one to shy away from others or source of help even in difficult situations.

In this study, the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) established by Rosenberg in the 1960's is employed to operationally gauge the level of self-esteem among students in the Pusat ASASI UPM. This scale measures self-esteem through five positively phrased items and five negatively phrased items. Scores are summed up for interpretation of results, with higher scores

signifying higher self-esteem and lower scores low self-esteem (Gray-Little, Williams & Hancock, 1997).

1.10.3 Resilience

Resilience is the process through which individuals utilize personal and environmental resources in order to acclimatize to, or cope with significant stresses or trauma of everyday life (Windle, 2010). Resilience in other words refers to a person's capability to handle stressful situations and to rebound from hardships (Connor & Davidson, 2003). In this study, resilience is operationally demarcated as the aptitude to "bounce back" and adapt to stressful situations.

In this study, the 25-item Connor-Davidson Resilience (CD-RISC) scale established by Connor and Davidson in 2003 is engaged to gauge the level of perceived social support among students in the Pusat ASASI UPM. This scale measures support from three entities: Family, Friends and Significant Others. Scores are summed up for interpretation of results, with higher scores indicating that an individual was more resilient (Connor and Davidson, 2003).

1.10.4 Perceived Social Support

Social support is a coping mechanism in relation to stress and psychological or physical symptoms. Social support is characterized by the availability of other people in our lives to provide help and needed support when in need (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998). This support may be in various forms, practical help (financial assistance), informational (advice or suggestion), companionship (providing a sense of belonging) and others. In this study, perceived social support is conceptually demarcated as the trust or belief about the accessibility of potential support in difficult situations.

In this study, the 12-item Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988) is employed to operationally gauge the level of perceived social support among students in the Pusat ASASI UPM. This scale measures support from three entities: Family, Friends and Significant Others. Scores are summed up for interpretation of results. Higher scores indicate one's greater level of perceived social support (Edwards, 2004).

1.10.5 Attitude Towards Seeking Counseling

Attitudes towards seeking counseling refer to psychological help seeking attitudes. It is also a coping mechanism related to stress and psychological or physical indicators. It is the general inclination to seek help and also the willingness to seek trained mental health practitioners for issues related to mental health and wellbeing (Lillios, 2010). In this study, attitude towards

seeking counseling is conceptually defined as the positions of students in regards to seeking professional psychological help namely counseling when the need arises.

In this study, the 10-item Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH) developed by Fischer and Farina (1995) is used to operationally gauge respondent's general help seeking attitudes for mental health issues. Professional psychological help mentioned in this study also refers to counseling; the two terms are used interchangeably. Scores are summed up for interpretation of result. Greater scores show more positive attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help (Chai, 2000; Chan and Hayashi, 2010; Simpson, 2006).

1.11 Summary

Self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and attitude towards seeking counseling among adolescents in Pusat ASASI, UPM is unknown. There are eight research questions to assess the level of self-esteem, resilience, perceived social support and attitudes towards seeking counseling among adolescents in the above-mentioned school. Other predictive factors such as demographic variables (e.g. gender and family structure), which may impact a student's self-esteem, resilience and perceived social support thus impacting their help seeking attitudes, are also scrutinized in this study.

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BIODATA OF STUDENT

Puspha A/P Sukumaran was born on 5 November 1980 in Penang, Malaysia. Upon completion of her Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) in 1997, she pursued Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM) at St. George Girls' School, Penang. She has a B.A. (Hons) in Translation and Interpretation from the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia. After teaching for more than a decade she enrolled in the Guidance and Counseling Masters Programme at the Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2013.





UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

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SELF-ESTEEM, RESILIENCE, PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT AND ATTITUDE
TOWARDS SEEKING COUNSELING AMONG PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN A
UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA

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